



(S//SI) A Language Intern's TDY to the Middle East

FROM: [REDACTED]
Language-Analyst Intern
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(TS//SI) I think that it hit me in Bosra: "Hey, this is kind of cool." That's because there I was seated in the second row of one of the Middle East's best preserved Roman amphitheatres, listening to the Syrian National Symphony and a group of opera singers from Italy performing portions of Carmen. And how did I get there? I was there because I had been given the chance to serve with F6 on TDY to Damascus.

[REDACTED]
Roman Amphitheater in Bosra, Syria

(S//SI) I say, "given the chance," because for me it was the best experience I have had so far as an NSA language-analyst intern. After all, not only was I travelling to an exotic country on someone else's dime, but I was also getting the opportunity to expand my professional experience immensely and go sight-seeing in my time off.

(S) On the professional side, deploying with F6 meant that I got to see first-hand the front end of SIGINT collection. But beyond that, I was able to work not only with a professionally diverse group of SIGINT colleagues at the site, but also with a range of professionals from different parts of the intelligence community. In this way, the experience was like getting a up-close look of the intelligence community in miniature: the kind of view that many an intern won't get in a year at headquarters.

(S) Of course, "all work and no play," as the saying goes. So I also made the most of my being in Damascus -- reputed to be the oldest, continuously inhabited city in the world. Besides the city's museums, souqs, and artist studios, there were plenty of things to see throughout the country. Imagine Palmyra with its acres and acres of ancient ruins or Apamea where the surviving Roman road is still faced with 600 columns and ancient shop fronts.

[REDACTED]
Apamea

(S) I spent 40 days in Syria and took full advantage of the great opportunity given me. My perspective as a professional was greatly broadened, and my memories as a tourist were out of this world. That's why I say that I was "given the chance" to go, and that's why, if you were given the chance, I'd tell you to pack your bags and get ready to have a great time.

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